



Senate Finance Committee
March 6, 2020

SB787: Family Investment Program -Temporary Cash Assistance -
Eligibility
Position: SUPPORT

CRBC supports SB 787 because it is legislation crucial in the stability and well-being of children and their families' economic survival.

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) is a federally mandated citizen review panel that provides oversight for child welfare and consists of Governor appointed volunteers representing the 23 counties and Baltimore City. We are charged with examining the policies, practices, and procedures that impact Maryland's children, and make recommendations for systemic improvement. CRBC supports efforts that support socioeconomic stability of children, youth and their families, and equal access to opportunities that benefits familial preservation.

We strongly support SB 787 because it would eliminate full family sanctions on Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) programs by ensuring the dependent children are not punished for violations or requirements beyond their control. Many families depend on TCA to provide for their basic living expenses and housing needs. According to data compiled by Catholic Charities, 60% of recipient families were sanctioned at least once. The penalty impacts the family's ability to pay rent, provide regular meals, and may exacerbate or contribute to health challenges.

From a trauma focus perspective, economic hardship accounts for 21% of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) according to Child Trends located here in Maryland. It found that economic hardship was one of the two most common ACEs. The sanctions inadvertently subject children and their families to more trauma added to what already proves to be a challenging situation. ACES data confirms that adults who have experienced childhood trauma struggle with job problems, absenteeism, and poor academic achievement, all of which impact one's ability to meet the demands of gainful employment and thus contributes to benefit violations or sanctions.

Moreover, the sanctions have a greater impact on minority families. According to data purported by the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health, it was found that Maryland holds a rate of economic hardship well above the national average among African Americans and Hispanics (37% and 29% respectively) compared to 22% of their Caucasian counterparts. Removal of the full sanctions takes away the punitive effect of being dependent on public assistance. The proposed resolution allows for 30% of benefits to be recognized as a means for holding the adult recipient accountable while ensuring the dependent maintains access to 75% child designated allocation. Additionally, it requires a 30 day conciliation period to evaluate the contributing factors to the violation of non-compliance with program requirements.

Removal of the full sanctions takes away the punitive effect of being dependent on public assistance. The proposed resolution allows for 30% of benefits to be recognized as a means for holding the adult recipient accountable while ensuring the dependent maintains access to 75% child designated allocation. Additionally, it requires a 30 day conciliation period to evaluate the contributing factors to the violation of non-compliance with program requirements.

For these reasons, CRBC urges a favorable report on SB 787.

Citizens Review Board for Children

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